

CATHERINE'S LITERARY WORK

they cry out before Me, with the glorious Paul: *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" *

Such souls yearn to be delivered from the body, but are perfectly resigned to the will of God, rejoicing in being allowed to suffer for His honour. Their union with Him, thus temporarily interrupted, is ever renewed with increased intimacy : " I ever return with increase of grace and with more perfect union, ever revealing Myself to them anew, with a more lofty knowledge of My truth." ² It is for such souls as these, with their prayers and sweat and tears, to wash the face of Christ's Spouse, the Church : " for which reason I showed her to thee in the guise of a damsel, whose face was all made filthy, as though of one smitten with leprosy, by the sins of her ministers and of all the Christian community who feed at her breast."

A frightful picture of the corruption of the clergy follows, in the *frattato delle Lagrime*, after Catherine has touched at some length upon "the infinite variety of tears," and the way of coming to perfect purity. The dignity of the priesthood, and the ineffable mystery of the Sacrament which they have to administer, require a greater purity in the ministers of the Church than in any other creature. They are God's anointed, His Christs, with power over the Lord's sacramental body that even the Angels have not, and He considers all injuries done to them as inflicted upon Himself, as persecution of His blood. But, in contrast with Peter himself, Sylvester, Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Thomas Aquinas, and the other holy ecclesiastics of olden time, we are shown the modern priests and prelates, whose lives are founded in self-love, and who perform the office of devils. Avarice, lust, and pride are the masters that they serve. The table of the Cross is deserted for the sake of the tavern; the

¹ Cap. 79. In his Latin version, Fra Raimondo glosses: " Nota quod iste status est ille, in quo erat ista benedicta virgo Cathanna de Senis: ut oculi nostri viderunt apertissime."

² This is worked out in cap. 83, cap. 84, of which the modern printed editions and translations contain only a mutilated version of what we find in the MSS. and in Fra Raimondo's Latin.